DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 980 EA 017 498

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TITLE The Myth of Curvilinearity: An Analysis of Decision-Making Involvement and Job Satisfaction.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; Curriculum Development; Educational Administration; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Job Performance; *Job Satisfaction; *Organizational Climate; *Participative Decision Making; Recognition (Achievement); *Teacher Participation; Textbook Selection
IDENTIFIERS Contingency Models; Curvilinear Functions; Likert Scales

ABSTRACT

Past researchers have claimed that it is possible to over-involve individuals in decision-making and that this saturation may result in a decrease in job satisfaction. This paper presents a synthesis of three studies that covered the kindergarten through 12-th grade spectrum and tested the curvilinear relationship between teacher involvement in decision-making and job satisfaction. The research found that a significant relationship existed between respondents' decision condition and their level of job satisfaction. The results also indicate that the point of saturation has not been reached. From the responses in these studies it is reasonable to assume that administrators have considerable latitude in which to increase teacher involvement in decision-making before diminishing job satisfaction. The paper includes an extensive reference list, two tables, and one illustrative figure. (Author/MD)

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The Myth of Curvilinearity: An Analysis of Decision-Making Involvement and Job Satisfaction

1985 AERA Annual Meeting
Chicago, Illinois

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Abstract

Is it possible to overinvolve individuals in decision making? Past researchers have claimed so and have indicated that this saturation may result in a decrease in job satisfaction. This paper will present a synthesis of three studies which covered the K-12 spectrum and tested the curvilinear relationship between teacher involvement in decision making and job satisfaction. The results indicate that the point of saturation has not been reached; and thus, administrators have considerable latitude in which to increase teachers' involvement in the decision making process particularly in regard to managerial issues.

The Myth of Curvilinearity: An Analysis of Decision-Making Involvement and Job Satisfaction

School administrators make a myriad of decisions. These decisions range from minor to major and focus on a variety of content areas. Thus, of the administrative processes, decision making is probably the most perplexing, and yet, the most critical to successful administative behavior. Administrators, therefore, must throroughly understand the decision-making process and be capable of determining when and to what extent they should involve others in the process and when they should or must make decisions alone. Literature regarding decision-making theory (Lipham, 1974) has long purported the importance of involving those affected by a decision in the making of the decision; however, other researchers (Alutto & Belasco, 1972, 1973; Conway, 1976; Mohrman, Cooke, & Mohrman, 1978) have asserted that it is possible to overinvolve individuals in the decision-making process and that this overinvolvement often results in lower levels of job satisfaction. Whereas this argument is intuitively logical, recent studies (Flannery, 1980; Warner, 1981; & Schneider, 1984) have found that the point of saturation has not been reached. This paper will synthesize the results of these studies which covered elementary, middle and junior high, and senior high levels and discuss the concept of the curvilinear relationship between decision-making involvement and job satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of decision involvement questions how often and to what extent an individual or group should be involved in the decision-making

process. The widespread advocacy of involving subordinates in the decision-making process has strong theoretical and experimental support.

Independent Variable: Decision Conditions

Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973) presented a theory of decision involvement based on the discrepancy between the actual and desired levels of decision involvement. This discrepancy measure assumed the continuum of involvement could be identified by three conditions: decision deprivation - individuals involved in fewer decisions than desired, decision equilibrium - individuals involved in as many decisions as desired, and decision saturation - individuals involved in a greater number of decisions than desired.

In order to establish the independent variable of decision condition, Alutto and Belasco (1973) used the following decision issues to determine respondents' levels of participation:

1. Hiring new faculty members
2. Selecting specific instructional texts
3. Resolving learning problems of individual students
4. Determining appropriate instructional methods and techniques
5. Establishing general instructional policies
6. Establishing classroom disciplinary policies
7. Planning school budgets
8. Determining specific faculty assignments
9. Resolving faculty member grievances
10. Planning new buildings and facilities
11. Resolving problems with community groups

12. Determining faculty salaries

Respondents indicated (a) whether they currently participated in that decision, and (b) whether they wished to participate. Each subject's condition of decision participation was determined by computing the absolute difference between the number of issues in which they were participating and those they desired to participate in. This yes-no scoring schema yielded the proposed conditions of deprivation (n=260), equilibrium (n=107), and saturation (n=87).

Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973) examined the relationship between the condition of decision involvement experienced by teachers and their levels of organizational commitment. A persistent theme in prior research had been that the desire to participate was equally and widely distributed throughout the teacher population. Therefore, denial of involvement in decision issues of importance was assumed to be related to lower levels of organizational commitment. Consequently, Alutto and Belasco constructed an index of organizational commitment based on subjects' responses to "whether or not the subject would leave his current schoool system for employment in another district if offered such inducements as a slight increase in pay, a slight increase in status, a position allowing slightly greater creativity, or a position in which colleagues were slightly friendlier" (1972, p. 118).

Alutto and Belasco (1973) found that contrary to prior assertions the desire to participate in decision making was not equally distributed throughout the sample but rather the three decisional conditions were differentially distributed among subjects teaching at various levels in the school system (1973, p. 35). Specifically, they found that elementary

teachers tended to be saturated while decisional deprivation was more characteristic of secondary teachers.

Furthermore, they found that the degree of organizational commitment did not vary by decision condition. Individuals in the decision condition of saturation did, however, score lower in their perception of the system than those in a condition of equilibrium, but not as low as those in deprivation. These findings indicated perhaps a curvilinear relationship between the variables tested-levels of involvement and organizational commitment.

Attempting to refine the findings of Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973), Conway (1976) tested the curvilinear relationship between levels of involvement and school satisfaction. Conway modified the Alutto-Belasco Decision Participation Scale by adding one item (dealing with administrative services), deleting one (determining disciplinary policies), and combining two (instructional policy determination and determining instructional techniques and techniques); thus, reducing the original list from twelve to eleven items. Furthermore, Conway modified the previous "yes-no" scoring procedure to allow teachers to indicate their degrees of present and desired involvement. This scoring procedure was felt to compensate for previous cancelling effects.

Conway (1976) chose to use Likert's Profile of School Scale (1967) which is frequently used on the total school membership to assess the system level of a school as the dependent measure in his study. Although the scale included both climate and effectiveness items, Conway indicated it was probably most accurately described as a measure of individual satisfaction

with the school as an organization.

The results of Conway's (1976) study indicated that the distribution of respondents' decision conditions was similar to that reported by Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973), with the largest proportion in the deprived category and the fewest in saturation. Conway further found that when the data were graphed a parabolic relationship appeared. This relationship appeared to explain the small relationship which was found (.05) when the linear correlation coefficient was computed. However, when the order was changed to deprivation through saturation to equilibrium the correlation coefficient increased to .09. In order to further explore this relationship, Conway computed the correlation to the left of equilibrium (.[illegible]6) and to the right (-.848). These analyses confirmed, but only to a minor degree, the existence of a curvilinear relationship.

Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978), basing their research on Parsonian theory regarding the various levels of an organization's control hierarchy, examined involvement in decision making in relation to Parsons' (1951) technical, managerial, and institutional decision domains in which qualitatively different decisions are made. These categorizations sugggested that participation in decision making by organizational members might be differentially appropriate depending on the decision domain of the issue. Mohrman et al. noted that contingency models had focused on the types of decisions that should be made participatively to achieve organizational effectiveness. However, they also indicated that while "research has considered the 'fit' between the individual and the amount of participation; the fit between the individual and the domain of

participation generally has not been investigated" (p. 15).

In order to bridge this gap in the research, Mohrman et al. (1978) investigated the applicability of utilizing decision domains. They used Alutto and Belasco's (1972) twelve decision issues which were previously listed. For each issue respondents were asked to indicate (1=never to 5=always) their actual and desired levels of participation. Individuals received three scores of each issue: actual, desired, and discrepancy. The decision issues were then factor analyzed and two dominant factors emerged. Issues 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 referred to the managerial domain and issues 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 referred to the technical or instructional. These domains were then related to measures of the respondents' levels of job satisfaction. The job satisfaction measure asked respondents to report, on a six-point scale, their satisfaction with various intrinsic and extrinsic factors of their jobs.

The findings of Mohrman et al. (1978) supported Alutto and Belasco's (1972, 1973) assertion that the desire by subordinates to participate in decision making is not evenly distributed throughout the organization. However, the condition of saturation did not exist in that no individuals in the sample reported excessive participation. The range of scores for each issue was 0 to -4.

In addition, Mohrman et al. (1978) concluded that teachers desired greater involvement in technical issues than in managerial issues which related to Bridges' (1969) research regarding teachers' zones of acceptance and indicated that technical issues fall outside of teachers' zones of acceptance; whereas, managerial issues have a greater expectancy of falling

within their zones of acceptance. Teachers indicated that they should have and perceive themselves to have significantly more participation in the technical domain than in the managerial domain. Furthermore, the participation in technical issues had a small, but significant, relationship with both extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction; whereas, involvement in managerial issues was positively correlated with participation in technical isses, a significant relationship between involvement in the managerial domain and job satisfaction did not exist.

Duke, Showers, and Imber (1980) also explored the levels of teacher involvement in decision making. Their study assessed teachers' perceptions of costs and benefits of involvement in school decision making. Teachers interviewed rated the potential costs as low and the benefits as high, however, when questioned about their actual involvement in decision making, teachers reported that they were less than anxious to participate and when they did they derived little satisfaction. The majority felt that when they did participate they benefited little and questioned whether their involvement had made any difference. Duke et al. concluded that even though teachers perceived benefits to their involvement, they believed the probability of realizing the benefits was low. Thus, in order to increase teachers' levels of satisfaction, their involvement in the decision-making process must be perceived as influential.

Dependent Variable: Teacher Job Satisfaction

Many researchers have related involvement in decision-making to the organizational outcomes of job satisfaction and job performance. Early studies concerning job satisfacton were conducted in industrial settings.

For example, Morse and Reimer (1956), using two work groups, autonomy and hierarchically controlled, conducted a study regarding the relationship between the means by which organizational decisions are made and individual job satisfaction and productivity and found for individuals involved in the autonomy work group (greater decision-making involvement by rank-and-file employees) satisfaction increased significantly. Both decision-making systems increased productivity, with the hierachically controlled group (greater decision-making by uppper management) resulting in the greater increase.

Vroom (1964) found evidence of a low, but consistent, relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Lawler and Porter (1972) continued research in this domain and argued that satisfaction of employees influences absenteeism and turnover. They also argued that rather than satisfaction being a cause of performance, performance causes satisfaction. This final assertion is consistent with views taken by proponents of human resources management (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1979).

Furthermore, the relationship between performance and satisfaction appears to be intuitively logical. However, various researchers (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Aram, Morgan, & Esbeck, 1971; Green & Organ, 1973) have concluded that this relationship is not simple and direct. Herzberg et al. (1959) conducted their now-famous study of industrial employee job satisfaction and developed what is now known as the "two-factor theory of job satisfaction" which, simply stated, indicates that it is possible for workers to be satisfied and dissatisfied simultaneously. In addition, Herzberg et al. concluded that while hygiene

factors may prevent dissatisfaction, these factors do not necessarily lead to job satisfaction, whereas motivational factors do. In this case, involvement in the decision-making process could be considered a motivator in that the involvement is an integral part of work itself, often results in recognition, and leads to a feeling of self-confidence and competence.

Katzell and Yankelovich (1975) in an extensive literature review cited a number of studies (Morse & Reimer, 1956; Vroom, 1959; Seashore & Bowers, 1963; Powell & Schlacter, 1971) all of which reported a significant relationship between decision involvement and job satisfaction. The findings of these studies indicated that:

1. Work groups whose members have more say over the group's production goals, work, and working conditions usually have higher average job satisfaction.
2. Members of participative groups have stronger work motivation.
3. Productivity is usually, but not always, higher in groups having more control.
4. Two conditions that seem effective in improving productivity via changed control patterns are when groups are given a greater say in goal setting and when groups are involved in determining modes of pay for performance.

Holdaway (1978) presented data on the levels of and relationship between overall job satisfacton and facet satisfaction. He found that intrinsic facets (achievement, career orientation, recognition, stimulation, working with students) were closely related to overall job satisfaction. Further the highest percentages of dissatisfaction occurred regarding the facets of attitudes of society and parents; status of teachers; decision-making; consultative and bargaining procedures; preparation time and staff procedures.

Holdaway's research provided general support to Herzberg's two-factor theory of job satisfaction.

Methods

The three studies to be presented analyzed the relationship between decision-making involvement and job satisfaction at three levels: elementary, middle and junior high, and senior high. In addition, the intent of the studies was to investigate the curvilinear relationship between decision condition and satisfaction which was posited by Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973) and Conway (1976).

Hypotheses

For purposes of these studies, increased involvement in decision making was assumed to result in increased job satisfaction. However, since previous studies indicated variance existed within decision conditions, the nature of involvement deserved further exploration. Therefore, to more clearly understand the relationship between decision-making involvement and job satisfaction, the following hypotheses were explored:

1. The mean scores attained on job satisfaction will not differ for each decision condition.
2. A curvilinear relationship will not exist between the independent variable of decision condition and the dependent variable of overall teacher job satisfaction.

Instrumentation

The **Decision Involvement Analysis** questionnaire used to operationally define the constructs of decision condition and job satisfaction consisted of two parts:

Part I: Decision Involvement Analysis; and

Part II: Job Satisfaction Survey

Part I of the questionnaire provided measures of the independent variable of decision condition. To measure this variable two substantive questions regarding twenty decision issues were asked.

1. What is your ACTUAL EXTENT of involvement in making this decision?

2. What is your DESIRED EXTENT of involvement in making this decision?

Respondents were requested to answer both questions using a forced-choice, four-point Likert scale in relation to each of twenty decision issues which related to both the technical and managerial domains of decision making identified by Parsons (1951) and Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978). Factor analysis of pilot test data indicated that seven of the twenty decision issues related to the technical/instructional level and the remaining thirteen related to the managerial/schoolwide level of decision making. According to these two domains, the selected decision issues were:

Instructional/Technical Domain Issues

01 Specifying the learning objectives for each unit of instruction

03 Developing procedures fo reporting student progress to parents

04 Developing procedures for assessing student achievement in your classes, subjects, or courses

07 Assigning students to instructional groups within your class, team, or department

09 Preparing the budget for your grade level, subject department, or instructional team

13 Planning student record-keeping procedures and practices

14 Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials

16 Determining grading procedures for evaluating the progress of your students

19 Evaluating how well your subject department or team is operating

Schoolwide/Managerial Domain Issues

02 Determining the administrative and organizational structure of your school

05 Establishing disciplinary policies in your school

06 Developing inservice programs for teachers in your school

08 Planning the student advisory program in your school

10 Resolving problems or issues in school-community relations

11 Setting and revising the goals of your school

12 Determining the procedures to be used for the evaluation of teachers

15 Allocating materials and equipment to grade levels, subject departments, or teams

17 Selecting department chairpersons or team leaders

18 Developing procedures for involving parents in planning each student's learning program

20 Hiring a new faculty member to teach in your grade level, subject department, or instructional team

The decision issues generally covered those used by Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973), Conway (1976), and Mohrman et al. (1978) while adding greater specificity.

Part II, the **Job Satisfaction Survey**, was based on Mendenhall's (1977) adaptations of the Index of Organizational Reactions (Dunham, Smith, & Blackburn, 1977) which was designed for white collar professional workers. To modify the IOR for teacher respondents, Mendenhall made several changes

by using different items, changing the response set, and substituting two of the scales (kind of work, amount of work) with scales to measure teacher satisfaction in regard to community and pupil relations. Mendenhall's survey consisted of eight scales, 50 items, and used a five-point Likert scale.

Speed (1979) developed a revised measure of teacher job satisfaction based on Mendenhall's (1977) Job Satisfaction Survey. Speed, using Mendenhall's data, computed a varimax orthogonal rotation factor analysis to determine the number and nature of underlying variables. The results of the factor analysis indicated nine scales existed instead of eight. Speed's revised survey consisted of 27 items which assessed nine scales (administration/supervision, co-workers, career future, school identification, financial aspects, work conditions, amount of work, pupil-teacher relations, community relations) and used a four-point Likert response format.

Reliability

Pilot tests were conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients. The reliability coefficients for the two questions in Part I ranged from .80 to .91 and from .83 to .87 for the Job Satisfaction Survey.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The population included teachers in public elementary, middle or junior high schools, and senior high schools in Wisconsin. In order to identify the sample of teachers, a random selection of elementary (12), middle/junior

(23), and senior high schools (23) was drawn from the Wisconsin public school directory. At each identified school a random sample of 12 teachers was chosen to complete the survey.

Only teachers who did not occupy formal administrative positions and who had been teaching in their present school for more than one year were included in the sample. The exclusion of teachers who had administrative responsibilities was an attempt to reduce the number of extraneous variables which might distort the focus of the study, which was teacher involvement in the decision-making process. The omission of teachers with less than one year of experience in their present school increased the likelihood that all responding teachers understood and had established relationships in the decision-making process.

Although the questionnaire developed for this study was suitable for mailing, each participating school was visited and the questionnaire was administered to the selected teachers and collected. For each sample, the number of completed and useable surveys (elementary, n=113 [78%]; middle/junior, n=266 [96%]; senior, n=237 [90%]) indicated the benefits of on-site data collection.

Analytic Procedures

To test the hypothesis that mean scores on job satisfaction would not differ for each of the decision conditions of deprivation, equilibrium, or saturation, the general decision condition of all respondents was determined. The scoring procedure was similar to the modified scoring process used by Conway (1976) and Mohrman et al (1978). In the modified process, for each respondent, a discrepancy score (DS) was computed for each

decision issue within each sample by subtracting the desired level of involvement (D) from respondents' perceived actual levels (A). A final decision condition score (DC) was computed for each respondent by summing the twenty decision issue scores.

The possible range for decision condition scores was -60 to +60 and the following ranges were found for each sample: elementary level (-38 to +8); middle and junior high (-45 to +2); and senior high (-50 to +3). If Alutto and Belasco's (1973) scoring format had been employed, over 90 percent of each sample (see Table 1) would have been classified as deprived, a finding consistent with Mohrman et al's (1978). Thus, the scores indicated that a general state of deprivaton existed and that the decision conditions of equilibrium and saturation did not exist in the pure sense defined by Alutto and Belasco (1972). Consequently, the data were trichotomized to form three decision conditions--low, medium, and high. The resultant decision conditions for each sample were:

elementary - low (≤ -15), medium ($-14 \leq m \leq -7$), high (> -7);

middle/junior high - low (≤ -19); medium ($-19 < m \leq -11$), high (> -11);

senior high - low (≤ -19), medium ($-19 < m \leq -10$), high (> -10).

Insert Table 1 about here

Once decision conditions were established, the hypotheses of the studies were tested. One-way analysis of variance was used to determine whether differences existed between decision conditions and respondents' levels of job satisfaction (see Table 2 for summary data) and correlational

TABLE 1

DECISION CONDITIONS-DEPRIVATION, EQUILIBRIUM, & SATURATION

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS

Level	Deprivation	Equilibrium	Saturation
Elementary	92% n=113	4% n=5	4% n=5
Middle/Junior	96% n=266	2% n=5	2% n=5
Senior	98% n=233	2% n=2	2% n=2

analysis was used to explore the curvilinear concept.

Insert Table 2 about here

Results

Results of analysis of variance indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected for each respondent group and it was concluded that a significant relationship existed between respondents' decision condition and level of job satisfaction. Furthermore, each analysis was followed by Scheffe post hoc procedures to determine the significance of all pairwise comparisons among means.

In the elementary study, although the omnibus f-test indicated that significance between the mean scores on job satisfaction did exist, the Scheffé post hoc procedures indicated that the low level of decision involvement was significantly lower than both the middle and high levels but no difference existed between the middle and high levels. This finding would indicate that elementary respondents' levels of job satisfaction had begun to plateau as their involvement increased. This observation coincides with Alutto and Belasco's (1972, 1973) and Conway's (1976) conclusions that as actual and desired participation equalize satisfaction will level off before declining as saturation occurs. However, in the elementary study evidence of a decline was not found.

In the middle and junior high and senior high studies, the overall results indicated that respondents in a decision condition of high involvement had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than those

TABLE 2

SUMMARY TABLE - ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

LEVELS OF DECISION INVOLVEMENT & JOB SATISFACTION

Level	Low	Medium	High	F-Value	F Prob
Elementary	72.71 n=35	79.56 n=39	82.77 n=39	10.92*	.0000
Middle/Junior	67.72 n=85	73.52 n=91	78.41 n=82	25.54*	.0001
Senior	68.03 n=73	74.29 n=92	78.44 n=72	30.78*	.0001

* Significant at the .05 level.

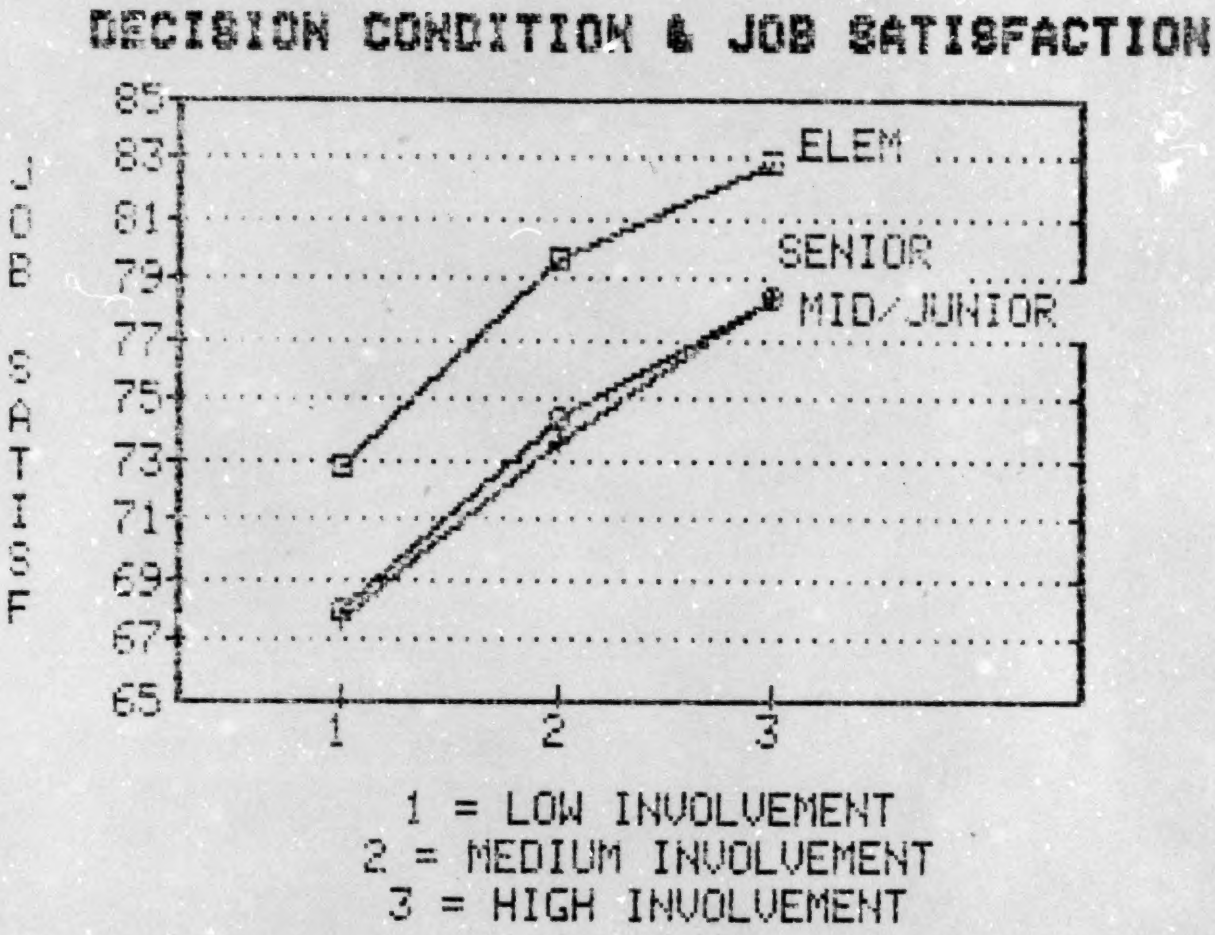
respondents in conditions of medium or low involvement; and respondents in a condition of medium involvement had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than those in a condition of low involvement, but a lower level of job satisfaction than those in a condition of high involvement. These results indicated a linear relationship existed between respondents' decision condition and level of job satisfaction.

To further analyze the concept of curvilinearty which was proposed by Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973) and Conway (1976), Pearson product moment correlations were computed between the decision condition and satisfaction scores of each respondent within each sample. These correlations indicated a moderately strong linear relationship existed at all three levels: elementary (.4304), middle/junior high (.4279), and senior high (.4930). Each correlation was significant at the .01 level. Furthermore, the correlations are much stronger than the .05 correlation reported by Conway (1976). Figure 1 provides a graph of these data and indicates the linear relationship between the variables. In addition, although the results of the analysis of variance within the elementary sample indicated a significant difference did not exist between the middle and high levels of involvement, the graph appears to be progressing in a linear manner.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In addition, individual item analyses indicated that respondents felt most deprived regarding managerial decision issues which was contrary to the findings of Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978). In particular, teachers

Figure 1



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expressed a desire for greater involvement in: determining the administrative and organizational structure of their school, determining procedures to be used for the evaluation of teachers, selecting department chairpersons or unit leaders, evaluating effectiveness of subject department or team, and hiring a new faculty member to teach in subject departments or instructional teams.

Conclusion

Perhaps of greatest significance was the fact that in each study less than five percent of the respondents indicated that they were either at a point of equilibrium or in a condition of saturation. These results indicate that although the concept of curvilinearity is plausible the point of saturation has not yet been reached.

This finding raises questions as to why higher levels of involvement were not found. One possible explanation might be that past experience of overinvolvement in decision making might have resulted in lower levels of satisfaction; therefore, respondents' involvement levels might have been adjusted with experience to account for this. The only level at which this proposition would appear to be reasonable would be the elementary since the data indicated that a significant difference did not exist between the medium and high levels of involvement. At the secondary levels all data indicate that the respondents' levels of satisfaaction are still increasing with increased levels of involvement.

In order to further enhance the decision involvement-job satisfaction relationship, school administrators should determine the decision condition of their staff members by assessing teachers' actual and desired levels of

involvement in the decision-making process. Similarly, administrators should be aware of the psychological importance of teachers' perceptions regarding the discrepancy between their actual and desired levels of involvement.

Not only do administrators need to assess teachers' levels of involvement, but they need to reach agreement with teachers regarding perceptions of what teachers' involvement is and ought to be. Only by doing so will administrators be able to achieve the appropriate level of teacher involvement in the decision-making process, and, judging from the responses of these studies, administators have considerable latitude in which to increase teacher involvement in decision making before diminishing job satisfaction.

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